

DPPR/C  
Comm. 27  
CJ

June 12, 1975

MEMORANDUM:

FOREIGN REACTIONS TO THE ROCKEFELLER  
COMMISSION REPORT

Initial reactions from the West European media generally combine favorable comment on the President's handling of the Rockefeller Commission's report with a sober appraisal of the difficulty of dealing with the problems the report has disclosed.

Two leading independent West German papers, for example, both acknowledge the dilemmas inherent in any intelligence organization's attempts to walk the thin line between responsibility in a democratic society and the achievement of the objectives of clandestine service. The Frankfurter Allegemeine Zeitung notes that "The truth must be told in an open society...dubious actions on behalf of the government are intolerable. On the other hand, intelligence services are not welfare organizations...the CIA has an important mission operating for the protection of the US and the West."

The prestigious London Times commented in similar vein. While praising the "valuable work" done by the CIA and urging that it be protected from "indiscriminate criticism," the paper also calls for "close and regular scrutiny" to minimize conflicts between CIA's necessary secrecy and methods of operation and the "values it exists to protect."

Several of the still relatively few comments we have noted see the investigation of the CIA as part of the overall process of self-examination resulting from the "US loss of political innocence" in Vietnam and Watergate. A Munich paper that makes this observation also notes that CIA is ideally suited to this "self-purge" both because it has engaged in activities that cannot stand the glare of publicity and because it cannot defend itself.

One respected Italian newspaper alludes to other revelations still to come while another of more leftist tendency refers to "the anguished feeling of insecurity caused by such ferociously bold wielding of power inside and outside the US borders."

Concerning the CIA's future, the limited comment thus far available combines endorsement of the Commission's recommendations with some skepticism that they go far enough. But there is also the thought that the Agency needs to get out of the headlines and, under reasonable controls, get on with its work.

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Preliminary Soviet and East European press coverage of the report has relied heavily on critical Western commentary. Tass replayed the New York Times editorials of June 11 and added a brief resumé of the Commission's findings, emphasizing the surveillance of mail to and from the USSR. The Soviet news agency embroidered a bit, however, by saying that gross violations of constitutional rights have long been common in US society.

A Hungarian commentator charged that "leading circles in Washington" are engaging in a "new cover-up operation," which would forever conceal CIA "assassination operations." Moscow, however, has made no mention of the assassination issue and thus far has avoided labeling the report a cover-up.

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The only editorial comment we have seen so far from Asia is in this morning's edition of the Bangkok Post, an English-language paper that is widely read by those educated Thai who are attuned to international affairs. The editorial reflects the new nationalism evident among Thai leaders. It is critical of the Commission for "belittling" the CIA's "crimes," but asserts that the "one good thing" is that there was an investigation at all and that the Senate Committee will continue the probe.